

**Letter of Findings: 04-20140413P
Negligence Penalty
For Tax Period April 2014**

NOTICE: IC § 6-8.1-3-3.5 and IC § 4-22-7-7 require the publication of this document in the Indiana Register. This document provides the general public with information about the Department's official position concerning a specific set of facts and issues. This document is effective as of its date of publication and remains in effect until the date it is superseded by the publication of another document in the Indiana Register.

ISSUE

I. Tax Administration - Negligence Penalty.

Authority: IC § 6-8.1-10-2.1; [45 IAC 15-11-2](#).

Taxpayer requests that the Department abate the negligence penalty.

STATEMENT OF FACTS

Taxpayer is in the restaurant business, operating three (3) locations in Indiana. Taxpayer failed to timely file the sales tax returns for the tax period April 2014, reporting and remitting the sales tax as statutorily required. The Indiana Department of Revenue ("Department") subsequently issued proposed assessments.

Taxpayer paid the assessments, but it requested that the Department abate the negligence penalty. A hearing was conducted by phone. Additional facts will be provided as necessary.

I. Tax Administration - Negligence Penalty.

DISCUSSION

The Department imposed a ten percent negligence penalty for the tax period in question. Taxpayer requested that the Department abate the negligence penalty.

Pursuant to IC § 6-8.1-10-2.1(a), the Department may assess a ten (10) percent negligence penalty if the taxpayer:

- (1) fails to file a return for any of the listed taxes;
- (2) fails to pay the full amount of tax shown on the person's return on or before the due date for the return or payment;
- (3) incurs, upon examination by the department, a deficiency that is due to negligence;
- (4) fails to timely remit any tax held in trust for the state; or
- (5) is required to make a payment by electronic funds transfer (as defined in [IC 4-8.1-2-7](#)), overnight courier, or personal delivery and the payment is not received by the department by the due date in funds acceptable to the department[.]

[45 IAC 15-11-2](#)(b) further states:

"Negligence" on behalf of a taxpayer is defined as the failure to use such reasonable care, caution, or diligence as would be expected of an ordinary reasonable taxpayer. Negligence would result from a taxpayer's carelessness, thoughtlessness, disregard or inattention to duties placed upon the taxpayer by the Indiana Code or department regulations. Ignorance of the listed tax laws, rules and/or regulations is treated as negligence. Further, failure to read and follow instructions provided by the department is treated as negligence. Negligence shall be determined on a case by case basis according to the facts and circumstances of each taxpayer.

The Department may waive a negligence penalty as provided in [45 IAC 15-11-2](#)(c), as follows:

The department shall waive the negligence penalty imposed under [IC 6-8.1-10-1](#) if the taxpayer affirmatively establishes that the failure to file a return, pay the full amount of tax due, timely remit tax held in trust, or pay

a deficiency was due to reasonable cause and not due to negligence. In order to establish reasonable cause, the taxpayer must demonstrate that it exercised ordinary business care and prudence in carrying out or failing to carry out a duty giving rise to the penalty imposed under this section. Factors which may be considered in determining reasonable cause include, but are not limited to:

- (1) the nature of the tax involved;
- (2) judicial precedents set by Indiana courts;
- (3) judicial precedents established in jurisdictions outside Indiana;
- (4) published department instructions, information bulletins, letters of findings, rulings, letters of advice, etc.;
- (5) previous audits or letters of findings concerning the issue and taxpayer involved in the penalty assessment.

Reasonable cause is a fact sensitive question and thus will be dealt with according to the particular facts and circumstances of each case.

In this instance, Taxpayer requests that the Department abate the negligence penalty for various reasons. Taxpayer first asserts that it had "never been late on a sales tax payment" and "has been a solid [taxpayer] for many years." Taxpayer also claims that it did not know that the due date to file the sales tax returns is the twentieth of the following month and, in this instance, it filed the returns eight (8) days late. Taxpayer further explains that "its office manager was distracted, upset and was not herself" because of some family issues.

Upon review, the Department is not able to agree that Taxpayer provided sufficient information to justify penalty waiver. First, Taxpayer's supporting documentation demonstrates that, since 2012, it has filed the sales tax returns, reporting the tax before the twentieth of each month. Prior to the assessments of the April 2014 tax period at issue, the Department's records also show that Taxpayer has a history of noncompliance. Additionally, since Taxpayer employs an individual to manage its business on its behalf, Taxpayer is ultimately responsible for the results. Thus, given the totality of the circumstances, Taxpayer has not provided sufficient information to justify penalty waiver.

Pursuant to the above mentioned statute and regulation, the Department is not able to agree that the negligence penalty should be abated.

FINDING

Taxpayer's protest of the imposition of negligence penalty is respectfully denied.

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